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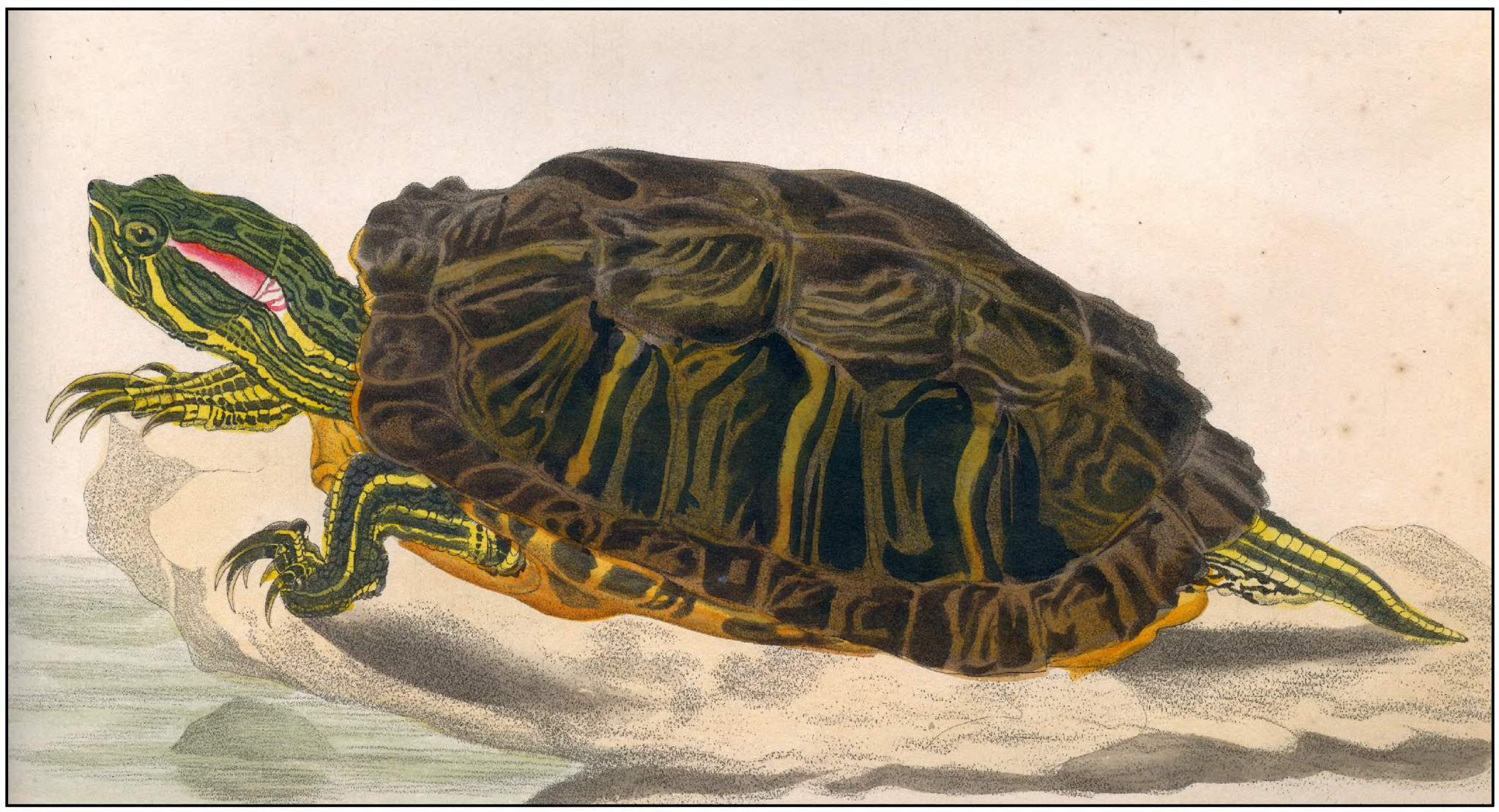

BULLETIN OF THE CHICAGO HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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Miscellanea Herpetologica Gabonica XIII . . . . . Olivier S. G. Pauwels, Mathilde J. L. Oger and Danny Meirte 145

Ace Pittman and Warren Buck: Two Early 20th Century Reptile Dealers . . . . . R. Michael Burger 152

What You Missed at the June Meeting: Show & Tell . . . . . John Archer 156

Tiger by the Tail and the "First Ouch" . . . . . Roger A. Repp 159

Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, June 15, 2018 162

Herpetology 2018 163

Advertisements 164

Cover: Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans*. Drawing (as *Emys elegans*) by Karl Bodmer from *Verzeichniss der Reptilien, welche auf einer Reise im nördlichen America beobachtet wurde* by Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, 1865.

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Miscellanea Herpetologica Gabonica XIII

Olivier S. G. Pauwels [1], Mathilde J. L. Oger [2] and Danny Meirte [3]

Abstract

We studied a collection of snakes (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*, *Hapsidophrys lineatus*, *Philothamnus heterodermus*, *Rhamnophis batesii* [Colubridae], *Dendroaspis jamesoni jamesoni*, *Naja melanoleuca* [Elapidae], *Aparallactus modestus*, *Polemon gracilis*, *Psammophis* cf. *phillipsii* [Lamprophiidae], *Letheobia caeca* [Typhlopidae], *Bitis arietans*, *B. gabonica* and *B. nasicornis*, and *Causus maculatus* [Viperidae]) presumably made in Oyem, Woleu-Ntem Province, northeastern Gabon, and housed in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium. The analysis of the letters sent by the collector to the museum reveals that some of these snakes were actually collected near Franceville in Haut-Ogooué Province. We examined a *Hydrophis platurus* (Elapidae) presumably originating from Gabon and housed in the collections of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium; an analysis of the collections' entry register indicates that it was in fact probably caught in West Papua. One snake species is newly recorded from Haut-Ogooué and Woleu-Ntem provinces each. The confirmation of the occurrence of *Polemon gracilis* in Gabon brings the number of reptile species documented for the country to 129. We report a case of predation by *Bitis arietans* on a bird.

Keywords

Biodiversity, herpetofauna, Squamata, vipers, sea snakes, scorpions, protected areas, Gabon, Equatorial Africa, West Papua.

Introduction

A collection of snakes housed in the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium) and said through the specimens' labels to have been collected in "Oyem, Gabon" in 1966 seemed to include several new province records. However, it contains several typical savanna dwellers (*Bitis arietans*, *Causus maculatus*, *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* and *Psammophis* cf. *phillipsii*), and we found this surprising as, to the best of our knowledge, there is no savanna area near Oyem (1°37'N, 11°35'E), a small town located in a forested area in Woleu Department, Woleu-Ntem Province, in northern Gabon. Since 1966 this collection associated with this locality has been available for study at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. It was partly used in some publications, and might have been used in some other works we do not know about. We thus examined the original documents associated with the deposition by J. Collot of this collection in the Royal Museum for Central Africa in order to clarify the geographical origin of the various specimens. In addition, we examined a specimen of the widespread sea snake species *Hydrophis platurus*, said to originate from Gabon, i.e., far north of the northernmost record of this species along the coasts of southwestern Africa.

Material and Methods

The preserved snake material was identified using the keys and morphological information provided by Chippaux (2006), Meirte (1992), Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008) and Wallach (2005). Ventral scales were counted according to the method of Dowling (1951). Dorsal scale rows were counted at one head length behind head, at midbody (above the ventral corresponding to half of the total number of ventrals), and at one head length before vent; subcaudal counts exclude the terminal pointed scale. Paired meristic characters are given left/right. Abbreviations: Morphology: A = anal plate; AT = anterior temporals; DSR = number of dorsal scale rows; F = female; IL = number of infralabials, followed in brackets by the number of IL in contact with the first pair of sublinguals; K = keeled; Lor = number of loreal scales; M = male; PoO = number of postoculars; PreO = number of preoculars; PV = number of preventrals; SC = number of subcaudals; SL = supralabials, followed in brackets by the SL in contact with orbit; SubO = subocular; SVL = snout–vent length; TaL = tail length; U = unkeeled; VEN = number of ventral scales. Varia: Dept = Department; Prov. = Province; RBINS = Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium; RMCA = Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium.

Results

Colubridae

Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia (Laurenti, 1768)

The adult male RMCA 28308 shows a vertical pupil; other morphological data are provided in Table 1. It was identified by Patrick Derleyn as *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia bicolor*. The finding of this savanna-dweller in the Oyem area would be

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Table 1. Morphological data for colubrid, elapid, lamprophiid and viperid snakes. NA = not recorded or not available. For the other abbreviations see Materials and Methods.

Species and collection number	Sex	SVL (mm)	TaL (mm)	DSR	PV + VEN	A	SC	SL	IL	Lor	PreO	PoO	AT
Colubridae													
Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia													
RMCA 28308	M	454	74	17-19-15, U	1+173, U	S	43, D, U	8(4-5)/8(4-5)	9(4)/10(5)	1/1	1/1	2/2	1/1
Hapsidophrys lineatus													
RMCA 28311	M?	504	217	15-15-13, K	1+157, K	S	111, D, slightly K	8(4-5)/8(4-5)	10(5)/10(5)	1/1	1/1	2/2	2/2
Philothamnus heterodermus													
RMCA 28310	F	438	164	15-15-11, U	2+150, K	S	80, D	9(5-6)/9(4-6)*	10(5)/10(5)	1/1	1/1	2/2	1/1
Rhamnophis batesii													
RMCA 28314	NA	747	325	13-13-10, U	2+165	S	106, D	7(4-5)/7(4-5)	8(5)/8(4)	1/1	1/1	3/3	1/1
Elapidae													
Dendroaspis j. jamesoni													
RMCA 28312	NA	NA	NA	NA	2 +?	NA	NA	8(4)/8(4)	9(4)/9(4)	0/0	3/3	4/4†	1/1
Naja melanoleuca													
RMCA 28319	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7(3-4)/7(3-4)	8(4)/8(4)	0/0	1/1	3/3	1/1
RMCA 28320	NA	462	97	25-19-13, U	1+218, U	S	67, D, U	7(3-4)/7(3-4)	8(4)/8(4)	0/0	1/1	3/3	1/1
RMCA 28321	NA	532	101	23-19-13, U	1+221, U	S	57, D, U	7(3-4)/7(3-4)	8(4)/8(4)	0/0	1/1	3/3	1/1
Lamprophiidae													
Aparallactus modestus													
RMCA 28309	NA	140	30	15-15-15, U	1+142, U	S	46 (1D+45S), U	7(3-4)/7(3-4)	7(4)/7(4)	0/0	1/1	2/2	0/0
Atractaspis boulengeri													
RMCA 28317	F	184	17	21-21-17, U	3+191, U	S	25 (7S+18D), U	5(3-4)/5(3-4)	5(3)/5(3)	0/0	1/1	1/1	1/1
Boaedon olivaceus													
RMCA 87-37-R-1	M?	433	85	25-27-21, U	3+189, U	S	54 (1D+45S+ 2D+6S), U	8(3-5)/8(3-5)	9(4)/9(4)	1/1	1/1	2/2	1/1
Psammophis cf. phillipsii													
RMCA 28313	F	688	302	17-17-13, U	2+167	D	99, D, U	8(4-5)/8(4-5)	9(4)/9(4)	1/1	1/1	2/2	2/2
Polemon gracilis													
RMCA 28318	NA	246	19	15-15-13, U	0+276, U	D	23, D	6(3)/6(3)	6(3)/6(3)	0/0	1/1	1/1	1/1
Viperidae													
Bitis arietans													
RMCA 28322	Juv	344	38	29-31-21, K	1+137	S	28 (3D+2S+7D+ 1S+3D+12S)	12(0)/13(0)	14(4)/14(4)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Causus maculatus													
RMCA 28315	NA	411	38	17-18-12	3+139‡	S	18 (17D+1S)	6(0)/6(0)	9(4)/9(4)	2§/1	2/2	2/2	2/2

* On the right side, the 4th SL contacts the orbit only at a single point.
† Not strictly postoculars, because on each side only one is in contact with the temporal.
‡ Plus one additional half ventral on the left side between the last ventral and the anal scale.
§ One above the other.

surprising on an ecological point of view and would represent a new provincial record. We believe that its actual locality of origin is not Oyem, but most probably Franceville (see Discussion and Table 2). This species was mentioned for the first time from Haut-Ogooué Prov. by Pauwels and Sallé (2009) based on an individual from Franceville.

Hapsidophrys lineatus Fischer, 1856
The adult individual RMCA 28311 shows a round pupil; its vertebral row is not widened; on each side its temporal formula is 2+2. Given the thickness of the base of the tail it is probably a male, but it could not be dissected for confirmation. Additional diagnostic characters are provided in Table 1. See Discussion and Table 2: it is indeed highly probable, but not certain, that this individual was actually collected in Oyem; finding this uncommon species in Oyem would represent a new provincial record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Philothamnus heterodermus (Hallowell, 1857)
The adult individual RMCA 28310 (see Table 1) shows a round pupil; on each side its temporal formula is 1+2+2; its scale row reduction from 15 to 13 happens above VEN 79 (left) and 82 (right) by fusion of dorsal rows 6 and 7, and from 13 to 11 above VEN 91 (left) and 89 (right) by fusion of rows 3 and 4. Two large eggs were detected in the posterior part of its body through palpation. See Discussion and Table 2, for the confirmation with certainty that this individual was collected in Oyem, which represents a new record for Woleu Dept (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Rhamnophis batesii (Boulenger, 1908)
The adult individual RMCA 28314 (see Table 1) shows a round pupil; on each side its temporal formula is 1; its vertebral row is

Table 2. Data on Collot's collection based on his letters to the RMCA, and the corresponding specimens in the RMCA.

Species and localities according to Collot's letters to RMCA	**Corresponding specimens in the RMCA**	**Remarks**
1 whole *Philothamnus*, Oyem	= *Philothamnus heterodermus* RMCA 28310	
1 whole unknown snake, Oyem		? = *Hapsidophrys lineatus* (RMCA 28311) or *Rhamnophis batesii* (RMCA 28314) or *Aparallactus modestus* (RMCA 28309) or *Atractaspis boulengeri* (RMCA 28317) or *Natriciteres fuliginoides* (RMCA 28316)
1 whole small unknown snake, Oyem		? = *Aparallactus modestus* (RMCA 28309) or *Atractaspis boulengeri* (RMCA 28317) or *Natriciteres fuliginoides* (RMCA 28316)
1 whole small unknown snake, Oyem		? = *Aparallactus modestus* (RMCA 28309) or *Atractaspis boulengeri* (RMCA 28317) or *Natriciteres fuliginoides* (RMCA 28316)
1 whole *Typhlops*, Oyem		? = *Letheobia caeca* RMCA 28305, but see below
1 whole *Leptotyphlops*, Oyem	= *Polemon gracilis* RMCA 28318	
1 *Naja* head, Oyem	= *Naja melanoleuca* RMCA 28319	
1 head & skin of *Bitis nasicornis*, Oyem	= *Bitis nasicornis* RMCA 28323	
1 head & skin of *Bitis gabonica*, Oyem	= *Bitis gabonica* RMCA 28324	
1 *Dendroaspis* head, Franceville	= *Dendroaspis j. jamesoni* RMCA 28312	
1 *Bitis arietans*, Franceville	= *Bitis arietans* RMCA 28322	
1 *Causus*, Franceville	= *Causus maculatus* RMCA 28315	
1 *Python sebae* head, Franceville	= *Python sebae* RMCA 28307	
2 small whole *Naja*	= *Naja melanoleuca* RMCA 28320-321	
1 whole *Typhlops*, Franceville		? = *Letheobia caeca* RMCA 28305, but see above
2 whole Colubridae, Franceville		= most probably *Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia* (RMCA 28308) and *Psammophis* cf. *phillipsii* (RMCA 28313), both savanna-dwellers

widened. It was wrongly identified by Patrick Derleyn as *Boiga blandingii*. According to our Discussion and Table 2, it seems that this specimen was indeed collected in Oyem, which would represent a new prov. record for this discreet and rarely encountered forest species (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Elapidae

Dendroaspis jamesoni jamesoni (Traill, 1843)

The preserved head of an adult individual (RMCA 28312) shows round pupils and two pairs of sublinguals. Its other available diagnostic characters are listed in Table 1. The finding of this species in Oyem would represent a new dept record (Knoepffler, 1966; Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels, Chirio et al., 2017), but see Discussion: the actual locality of origin is with certainty the area of Franceville, and the exact date of collection is 23 October 1965. This represents a new record for Haut-Ogooué Prov. (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Carlino and Pauwels, 2015; Pauwels, Chirio et al., 2017).

Naja melanoleuca Hallowell, 1857

The preserved head of the adult individual RMCA 28319 shows round pupils and a temporal formula of 1+2 on each side. Its other available diagnostic characters are listed in Table 1. Given that its massive head shows a maximal width of 58.1 mm, this cobra probably had a very large size. See the Discussion and Table 2, where we confirm without any doubt that this cobra head indeed originates from Oyem, where the species had already been mentioned by Knoepffler (1966). On the contrary, the two juveniles RMCA 28320 and 28321 (Figure 1) were actually collected with certainty in the surroundings of Franceville, where the species had also already been recorded (Pauwels, Albert et al., 2007). Their morphological data are provided in Table 1 (they are not individually numbered, so we arbitrarily name the smaller one RMCA 28320).

Lamprophiidae

Aparallactus modestus (Günther, 1859)

On each side the young individual RMCA 28309 shows a temporal formula of 0+1. According to our Discussion and Table 2,

Figure 1. Two preserved young *Naja melanoleuca* (RMCA 28320-28321) from "Oyem," but in fact from the surroundings of Franceville, Haut-Ogooué Prov., southeastern Gabon. Photograph by O. S. G. Pauwels.

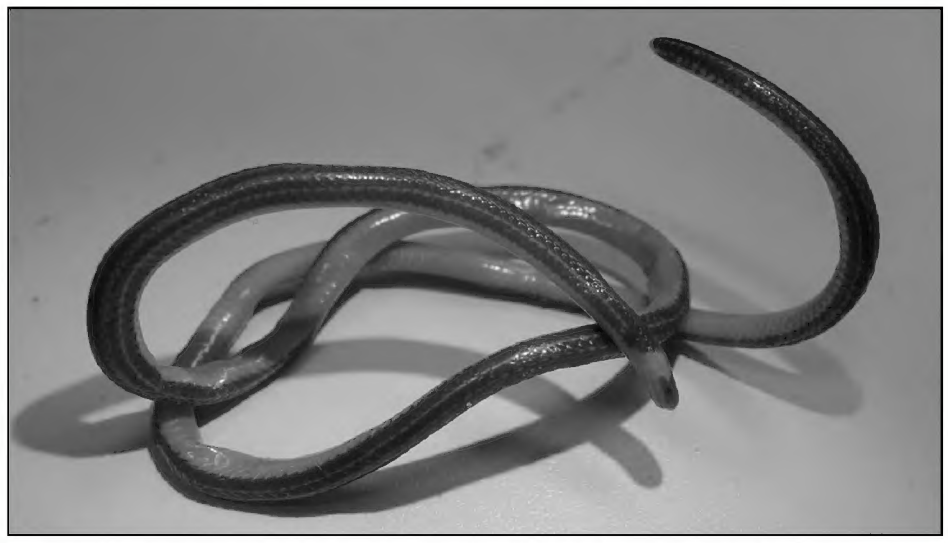

Figure 2. Preserved *Polemon gracilis* (RMCA 28318) from Oyem, Woleu-Ntem Prov., northern Gabon. Photograph by O. S. G. Pauwels.

Figure 3. Preserved *Letheobia caeca* from "Oyem, Gabon." Photograph by O. S. G. Pauwels.

it seems to originate indeed from Oyem, and it would then represent a new record for Woleu Dept (Knoepffler, 1966; Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels, Carlino et al., 2016).

Atractaspis boulengeri Mocquard, 1897
Like all other specimens treated here, according to its label, the young female individual RMCA 28317 was collected by J. Collot in Oyem, Gabon, in 1966. Our Discussion and Table 2 seem to confirm it. Its second infralabials are not fused with the sublinguals; other morphological characters are provided in Table 1. This specimen was wrongly identified by Patrick Derleyn as *Atractaspis c. corpulenta*. The species has already been documented from Oyem by Knoepffler (1966:19).

Polemon gracilis (Boulenger, 1911)
On each side of the specimen RMCA 28318 the eye is completely surrounded by the single postocular with which the brille is fused, a characteristic distinguishing *Polemon gracilis* from its congeners (Resetar and Marx, 1981). Its temporal formula is 1+1 on both sides. No supralabial is in contact with the parietals. The frontal is as wide as long. It has two pairs of sublinguals, the second one much smaller. The lower half of the supralabials and internasals is beige, their upper half is brown. There is a beige collar on the nape, medially interrupted by a brown line beginning at the posterior end of the frontal. The head underside, the belly and the tail underside are immaculate beige. Its dorsum is brown from the upper half of the 2nd dorsal row, with four continuous light lines from the head to the end of the tail. The lateral lines are located along the 4th dorsal row. The paravertebral lines are wider than the lateral lines (Figure 2). Its other diagnostic characters are listed in Table 1. It could not be dissected to determine its sex. This individual was first identified as *P. neuwiedi* (Jan, 1858) by Patrick Derleyn, then in 2008 as *P. gracilis* by Kevin Moore. Chippaux (2006:210) put a single dot on (northeastern) Gabon on his distribution map for the species, and indicated that Knoepffler (1966:16) erroneously identified a specimen from Gabon (presumably the one corresponding to the dot on the map) as *Miodon collaris collaris*. Knoepffler (1966) presented a single male specimen (MBG 1276) from Makokou, with the following morphological data: SVL 20 cm, TaL 1 cm, 15 DSR, 276 VEN, 19 SC, 1+1 temporals, 1 PreO, 2 PoO and 6 SL. Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008:200) had accepted Knoepffler's identification of this specimen as a *Polemon collaris* in spite of its too high VEN, and excluded *P. gracilis* from the list of reptiles of Gabon, pending documented records. Knoepffler's specimen should be re-examined, if it still exists. Our specimen from Oyem (see Discussion) brings a new snake record for Woleu-Ntem Prov., and confirms the presence of this forest species in Gabon.

Psammophis cf. *phillipsii* (Hallowell, 1844)
The palpation of the posterior part of the adult female RMCA 28313 (see its morphological data in Table 1) reveals eight large eggs between VEN 103 and VEN 164. Finding this specimen in Oyem would represent a new prov. record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels, Gillet et al., 2018), but see Discussion and Table 2: it most probably originates from the area of Franceville. Moreover, from an ecological point of view, it seems very unlikely that this savanna dweller could be found in the Oyem area.

Pythonidae
Python sebae (Gmelin, 1789)
The preserved head of the adult specimen RMCA 28307 shows a maximal width of 96 mm, 14(0)/14(0) SL, 22/22 IL and 9/9 circumocular scales. An observation of this python in Oyem would represent a new prov. record, Woleu-Ntem being the last of the provinces of Gabon from where the species has not yet been recorded (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels, Carlino et al., 2017; Pauwels, Chirio et al., 2017), but see Discussion: in fact this individual was with certainty collected in the area of Franceville, Passa Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov. New locality record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Typhlopidae
Letheobia caeca (Duméril, 1856)
The adult individual RMCA 28305 (Figure 3) is uniformly pinkish and shows a SVL of 323 mm, a TaL of 5 mm; a mid-body diameter of 5 mm; a ratio total length/midbody diameter of 65.6; 22-22-22 scale rows. The rostral, nail-shaped, covers most of the dorsal surface of the head; its sides are parallel. It is a female, as deduced by the fact that we detected by palpation nine eggs in the posterior part of its body. This individual was erroneously identified by P. Derleyn as *Rhinotyphlops crossii*. See Discussion: Collot mentioned a "*Typhlops*" from the area of Oyem, another from the area of Franceville. Its locality of origin thus remains doubtful, as it cannot be solved based on the letters Collot sent to Belgium.

Viperidae
Bitis arietans (Merrem, 1820)

Figure 4. Preserved juvenile *Bitis arietans* (RMCA 28322) from "Oyem," but in fact from the vicinity of Franceville, Haut-Ogooué Prov., southeastern Gabon. Photograph by O. S. G. Pauwels.

The juvenile specimen RMCA 28322 shows no horns, a vertical pupil, 9 scales between the eyes, strongly keeled dorsals and a whitish interocular bar (Figure 4). Its main diagnostic characters are provided in Table 1. X-rays revealed a bird in its stomach. See Discussion: its actual locality of origin is not Oyem (this savanna species was never reported from, and is not expected to occur in, Woleu-Ntem Prov.), but with certainty in the vicinity of Franceville, Passa Dept, in Haut-Ogooué, where the species is well known since it was confirmed by Pauwels and Sallé (2009).

Bitis gabonica (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854)
Only the head of the large adult specimen RMCA 28324 was preserved. This head's maximal width is 94.3 mm; it shows 14(0)/15(0) SL and 19(5)/18(5) IL; a single pair of sublinguals; well developed nasal horns and two black suborbital triangles; it is damaged, probably due to several machete hits. See Discussion and Table 2: this individual is mentioned in a few letters, including one dated 13 March 1965 sent from Oyem, in which Collot wrote "Je pense qu'il vous serait intéressant de savoir que j'ai découvert une vipère le 12.I.65, dont la longueur, de la tête à l'extrémité de la queue était de 2m10. […] La tête de la bête a été malheureusement endommagée, et je l'ai conservée dans un mélange formol eau. La peau, dont la largeur maxima est de 43 cm, a été conservée après grattage, avec de la poudre d'alun de potasse." ("I think that you will be pleased to know that I discovered on 12 January 1965 a viper whose length, from the head to the extremity of the tail, was 2.10 m. […] The head of this animal was unfortunately damaged, and I preserved it in a mixture of formalin and water. The skin, whose maximum width is 43 cm, was kept after scraping, with alum potash powder"). In another letter (see Discussion), Collot gave the total length as 215 cm. The maximum total length known for *Bitis gabonica* is 180 cm (Chippaux, 2006; Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008). The skin of this exceptionally large individual could not be found back in the RMCA collections to verify its actual length. The finding of this viper in Oyem represents a new dept record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels, Carlino et al., 2017).

Bitis nasicornis (Shaw, 1802)
The specimen RMCA 28323 is the head of an adult individual showing well developed nasal horns; 16 scales between orbits on the dorsal surface of the head; 15/16 circumocular scales; 17(0)/18(0) SL; 20(5)/19(5) IL (with two extralabials on the left side); a single pair of sublinguals; and 2 PV. Collot's letters and Table 2 confirm with certainty that it has been collected in Oyem. This mention represents a new dept record (Knoepffler, 1966; Pauwels, Carlino et al., 2017). We take this opportunity to report that the *Bitis nasicornis* illustrated without locality by Chirio (2017:52) is the same individual from Wonga-Wongué Presidential Reserve presented by Pauwels, Carlino et al. (2017:101).

Causus maculatus (Hallowell, 1842)
The individual RMCA 28315 has a round pupil, one SubO on each side, a temporal formula of 2+4 on each side, a single pair of sublinguals, and 28 dark blotches on dorsum till above cloaca; its dorsals are slightly keeled in the posterior part of the body; more characters are presented in Table 1. The mention of this viper from Oyem would represent a new prov. record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008). It would also be surprising, as this species is a savanna dweller. See Discussion and Table 2: this individual was actually collected with certainty in the surroundings of Franceville, in Passa Dept, at an altitude between 350 and 430 m asl. The species had already been recorded from Franceville (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Discussion

There is a long series of letters between the Lieutenant Jean Collot and Dirk Thys van den Audenaerde (who later became the director of the RMCA), housed in the archives of the herpetology section of the museum. Although the entry register for the herpetology section indicates the whole Collot's collection as originating from Oyem, the letters reveal that while a part of the collection indeed came from Oyem, another part was collected near Franceville in the Haut-Ogooué Province. As a French soldier Collot was first based in Oyem then in Franceville, from where the letters were successively sent. In a letter sent from Oyem on 13 March 1965, Collot wrote "J'ai pu capturer un serpent arboricole que je pense faire partie du genre *Philothamnus*, deux specimens à l'aspect vermiforme semblant être des genres *Typhlops* et *Leptotyphlops*" ("I could catch an arboreal snake which I believe is a member of the genus *Philothamnus*, two vermiform specimens which seem to belong to the genera *Typhlops* and *Leptotyphlops*"). We believe that the extremely thin and elongate *Polemon gracilis* mentioned above corresponds to this "*Leptotyphlops.*" In a more recent letter dated 25 October 1965 and sent this time from Franceville, Collot wrote "La région de Franceville est une zône [sic] tout à fait différente de celle d'Oyem. Ici, savane et forêt galerie. Beaucoup de serpents. J'ai pu ramasser un splendide mamba, voici deux jours, dont je n'ai pu que conserver la tête. Beaucoup de petites vipères, que je pense être *Bitis lachesis*" ("The area of Franceville is quite different from Oyem area. Here, savanna and gallery forest. Many snakes. Two days ago I could collect a splendid mamba, of which I could preserve only the head. Many small vipers, which I think are *Bitis lachesis*"). Here there is no doubt that the *Bitis arietans* and the *Dendroaspis jamesoni jamesoni* reported above originate from Franceville area, and not from the Oyem area. In another letter dated 21 November

1966, also sent from Franceville, Collot mentioned again two vipers treated above: "De toute façon, j'ai procédé à deux expéditions, la premiére [sic], d'un petit colis contenant deux peaux de vipéridés. La peau d'une *Bitis gabonica*, dont je vous avais parlé, et mesurant 2 mètres 15 du nez à l'extrémité de la queue. La seconde était une peau de *Bitis nasicornis*. Ces deux spécimens étaient originaires de la région d'Oyem, dans le Woleu-Ntem, province Nord du Gabon, et, à une altitude de 640 métres [sic]" ("Anyway, I made two sendings, the first, of a small package containing two viperid skins. The skin of a *Bitis gabonica*, that I mentioned you earlier, measuring 2.15 m from its snout to the extremity of its tail. The second was a skin of *Bitis nasicornis*. Both specimens originated from Oyem area in Woleu-Ntem, the northern province of Gabon, at an altitude of 640 m"). Further in the same letter, Collot wrote: "La deuxieme expedition, dans un pot à lait, concerne [. . .]: Un *Typhlops* – Un Leptotyphlopidae – Un serpent dont je n'ai pu déterminer l'espéce [sic] – La tête de *Bitis nasicornis* – Un *Philothamnus* ?? – Un petit serpent inconnu – idem – La tête de *Bitis gabonica* dont je vous ai adressé la peau – La tête d'un *Naja*. Tous ces spécimens ont été récoltés dans la Région du Woleu-Ntem, aux environs d'Oyem, a [sic] 640 métres [sic] d'altitude" ("The second sending, in a milk pot, concerns [. . .]: One *Typhlops* – One Leptotyphlopidae – One snake I could not specifically identify – The *Bitis nasicornis* head – One *Philothamnus* ?? – One small unknown snake – idem – The head of the *Bitis gabonica* of which I had sent you the skin – The head of a *Naja*. All these specimens were collected in Woleu-Ntem Region, in the environs of Oyem, at an altitude of 640 m"). Still in the same letter, he mentioned below: "Un exp [=exemplaire] de *Causus* (trés [sic] fréquent) – Un exp de *Bitis* que je suppose etre [sic] de l'espéce [sic] *arietan* [sic] ? – La tête d'un *Dendroaspis* ? – La tête d'un *Python sebae* – Deux petits Najas ? noirs – *Typhlops* – Deux spécimens de Colubridés que je n'ai su déterminer. Ces serpents ont été récoltés dans la Région du Haut-Ogooué, aux environs de Franceville. Altitude 350 à 430 métres [sic]. Savane arbustive et savane. Forêts galeries dans les fonds" (One specimen of *Causus* [very common] – One specimen of *Bitis* which I suppose to belong to the species *arietan* [sic] – The head of a *Dendroaspis* ? – The head of a *Python sebae* – Two small black *Naja* ? – *Typhlops* – Two colubrid specimens that I could not identify. These snakes were collected in Haut-Ogooué Region, in the environs of Franceville. Altitude 350 to 430 m. Savanna with shrubs and savanna. Gallery forests in the bottom of the valleys").

Pauwels, Braun et al. (2017) reported another snake collected by J. Collot in Oyem: a *Natriciteres fuliginoides* (RMCA 28316), previously erroneously published as a *N. variegata* by Hughes (2017). Its head scalation was illustrated by Meirte (1992:39), also under the erroneous identification of *Natriciteres variegata*. According to Collot's letter and Table 2, this individual seems to have indeed been collected in Oyem. In addition, non-herpetological material was also collected the same year by J. Collot, in particular a *Pandinus dictator* scorpion in the RMCA collections reported as originating from Oyem by Prendini (2004:260). Most probably it is this scorpion specimen which is referred to in Collot's letter of 21 November 1966: "J'ai cru utile de joindre dans les spécimens récoltés dans

Rev. R. LAURENT 1944
Pelamis platurus (L.)
Mus. Roy. Hist. Nat. Belg. - Kon. Natuurh. Mus. Belg.
Index 42. Rept. Mod. II.
Nom. Pelamis platurus (L.)
Loc.: Gabon.
Date: entré le 10. XI 1879
Rec.: Achat. Boucard.
Dét.: Rév R. Laurent 1944.
I.G.: 4414. Reg.: 394.

Figure 5. Preserved adult *Hydrophis platurus* (RBINS 394) from "Gabon" (in fact probably from West Papua). Photograph by O. S. G. Pauwels.

la Région d'Oyem, un magnifique représentant des Arachnides." ("I found it useful to add among the specimens collected in Oyem Region a superb representative of the Arachnids"), confirming its locality as published by Prendini.

The label of an individual of the elapid sea snake *Hydrophis platurus* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Figure 5), housed in the herpetological collections of the RBINS under the collection number RBINS 394, states that its locality of origin is "Gabon." It shows a SVL of 505 mm, a TaL of 72 mm; 0/0 Lor; 8(4)/8(4) SL (on the left side the 4th SL is fused with the SubO); 1/1 SubO; 1/1 PreO; 2/2 PoO; 1/1 supraocular; 3/2 AT; 10(3)/10(3) IL; 45-52-41 DSR (ventrals not differentiated, included in the DSR count); the lower flank scales and the ventral scales each shows two small spines directed backwards; valvular nostrils; and paddle-like tail. This sea snake species has a remarkably vast distribution in the Pacific and Indian Oceans; it is also known on the southwestern coast of Africa, thus in the southeastern Atlantic Ocean, but not North of Namibia (Wallach et al., 2014), at about 2000 km South of the coasts of Gabon. The specimen belongs to a collection (registered under the RBINS number I.G. 4414) of nearly 1300 zoological specimens, mostly reptiles, amphibians and fishes. According to the RBINS entry register, this collection was purchased from a certain "Boucard," and entered in the RBINS on 10 November 1879. The seller was probably Adolphe Boucard (1839–1905), a French traveler, collector and trader of natural history specimens, who provided collections to various museums (see among others, Voisin and Voisin, 2008). Boucard was himself buying collections from others, and the localities of origin should be considered with caution. In the RBINS entry register this specimen is just followed by another one of the same species, numbered RBINS 394β, also bought from Boucard and entered the same day, and said to originate from "Mansinam (N^{elle} Guinée [=New Guinea])." OSGP re-examined RBINS 394β, and confirms its identification as *Hydrophis platurus*. Very possibly, both specimens originate from Mansina Island in West Papua. To the best of our knowledge, this "Gabonese" specimen had not yet been published.

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Author's note: The following are biographical sketches of two rather prominent early 20th century reptile dealers, both of whom resided in southern New Jersey, close to the Philadelphia area. The first, a gentleman by the name of Asa "Ace" Pittman, became rather widely known through the writings of Staten Island Zoo curator Carl Kauffeld in his classic 1957 snake hunting adventure volume appropriately named Snakes and Snake Hunting. *The other figure, Warren Buck, accompanied his father as a young man to the wilds of Africa, bringing back the first green mambas and black spitting cobras to ever land in America. Bronx Zoo curator Raymond Ditmars gives an account of this dangerous cargo of snakes in his popular book* Snakes of the World, *a shipment he described as "the biggest batch of deviltry" he ever tackled. Warren Buck became a well-respected name in zoological circles in the ensuing years.*

This brief section has been taken from a much larger, soon-to-be-published work The Dragon Traders: A Collective History of the Reptile Trade in America and the Age of Herpetoculture. *The nearly 500-page book chronicles the trends, events, people, and places that were influential in the popularization of reptiles as pets, as displays in zoological gardens, and in the 20th century American show trade, eventually culminating in the arrival of the captive propagation movement, an endeavor now known as herpetoculture.*

Ace Pittman and Warren Buck: Two Early 20th Century Reptile Dealers

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Home of the legendary Jersey Devil, the Pine Barrens region of southern New Jersey is steeped in history and folklore. An hour east of Philadelphia, an hour-and-a-half south of New York City, and teetering on the edge of Atlantic City, this relatively flat, low-lying million-acre section of the Atlantic Coastal Plain is notable for its rich flora and fauna, and for its colorful people, also known (somewhat derogatorily) as "pineys."

One Pine Barrens resident in particular became quite famous within the reptile world. "No account of snakes in the Barrens would be complete without mention of Ace Pittman," wrote Carl Kauffeld in his book *Snakes and Snake Hunting*. Known as the "grand old man of the Barrens," Asa "Ace" Pittman's name was almost synonymous with the snakes of the region (Kauffeld, 1957).

Hailing from the vicinity of Upton Station, New Jersey, once a bustling station that saw 20 trains pass every day on the Pennsylvania Railroad between Camden and Toms River, Asa Pittman began collecting the local rattlers and pine snakes in the nearby Mt. Misery area, selling them in Philadelphia and other areas around the turn of the century. According to a newspaper account, Pittman had a black-and-white setter named Scott, with the remarkable ability to follow the scent trail of a snake, seize it by the neck, and await his master's approach. "This is an inevitable rule, except upon the discovery of a rattler," read the newspaper. "Instinct tells him that this breed of reptile is dangerous, and when he meets with one he circles about him at a safe distance, uttering a peculiar bark to summon his master's aid" (Anonymous, 1902).

H. L. Vahle, a turn-of-the-century Poughkeepsie, New York area animal dealer, made reference to a particular fellow who visited him one year hailing from the "interior wilds" of New Jersey. "Do you buy snakes?" the fellow asked, followed with "How many will you buy?" (Anonymous, 1901).

"At the end of May a box of fifty-two pine snakes came here," said Vahle. "There was no name on the box and no letter came from the shipper, but I guessed it was the Jerseyman who sent the snakes. Another box of sixty-seven snakes arrived in the first week of June. In the second week seventy-four snakes came. In the third week I got ninety-six more. I was receiving snakes all this time from Florida, too, and the result was I was getting overstocked. I wrote to the agent of the Jersey station whence all these snakes came and told him to ship me no more" (Anonymous, 1901).

"Pittman, they tell you, captures hundreds of rattlers, pine

Mrs. Asa Pittman with a pine snake. "Her main trade is in the pine, king, corn, milk, hog nose, and occasionally a timber rattler," quoted the newspaper. "She pays a standard $2.50 for any snake brought in. When she and Asa first started buying snakes, the regular price was only 50 cents. Her sale price depends upon the type of snake, its size, and coloration." *Asbury Park Press, Asbury Park, New Jersey. 6 September 1964.*

snakes, and copperheads and ships them to Germany and other foreign markets and is kept busy most of the year filling orders," noted a newspaper in 1928. "The demand has been so great and Pittman's art so successful that Burlington and Ocean County snakes appear to be in danger of extinction and Pittman fears he may have to move elsewhere to secure adequate supply for his trade" (Anonymous, 1928).

According to Kauffeld, who became acquainted with Pittman as a school boy in the late 1920s, "no trip to this region was complete without stopping at Ace's to see what he had in his cages and to hear the latest reports on snake activity" (Kauffeld, 1957). Kauffeld and other herpetologists apparently visited often, as another acquaintance recollects visiting Pittman in the early-to-mid-1950s, only to find out that Carl Kauffeld and Roger Conant had just passed through that very morning and had nearly "cleaned out his stock" of snakes (Graham, 2005). According to a *New York Times* article from 1950, "so many curious vacationers drop in unannounced that he displays a sign giving the time of his return when he is out on a collecting expedition" (Anonymous, 1950).

Professing to have been bitten only twice—once by a black widow and another time by a raccoon—but never by a snake, at the age of 71, Asa still covered ten to 15 miles a day hunting reptiles near his New Jersey home. His greatest catch on any single day involved 31 snakes of several species in 1938, all of which he ended up selling to the Bronx Zoo. Pittman found that, "if folks had more knowledge of snakes they would be less afraid of them. People just don't take enough interest in them" (Anonymous, 1950).

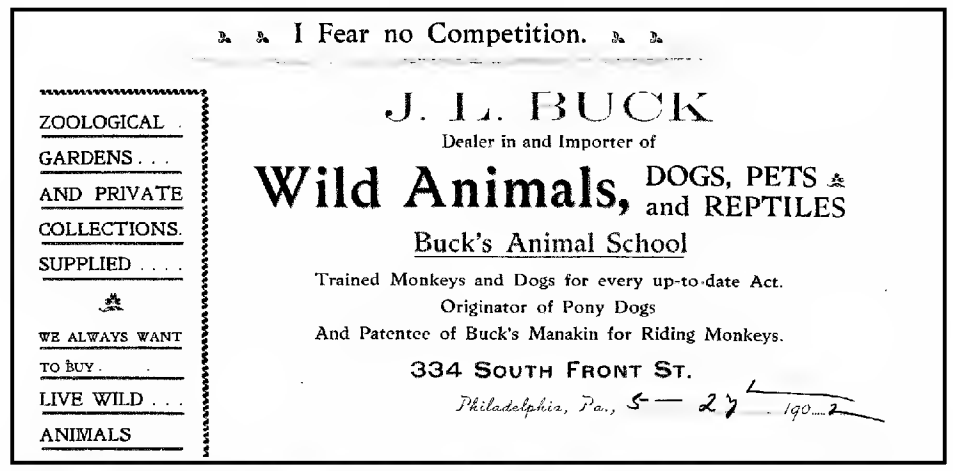
"Asa was a retired mail carrier whose delivery routes had, at one time or another, covered much of the Pines–or so he explained his familiarity with, seemingly, every sand track between Lakehurst and Cape May," noted a visitor. "Asa was an inveterate pipe-smoker; it seemed his mouth was without a pipe only when he ate or took a drink! Sadly, the habit finally did him in with mouth/jaw cancer" (Graham, 2005).

§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§

The Camden, New Jersey, area had its very own explorer, naturalist, and animal collector by the name of Warren E. Buck, not to be confused with Frank *Bring 'Em Back Alive* Buck. Operating a small private zoo in Delaware Township, New Jersey, Warren Buck perhaps was better known as a dealer in African mammals, birds and reptiles, with clientele that included both zoological institutions and private collectors.

Well respected in the industry, Warren Buck's name alone was "worth more to zoo curators than the wordy guarantees of a dozen other suppliers." According to Fred Ulmer, former Curator of Mammals at the Philadelphia Zoo, Buck offered "buyers a fair deal." His customers included zoos in St. Louis, Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, and Washington, to name a few (Schwartz, n.d.).

Warren's animal roots could be traced back to his father, Julius Buck, a man who traveled the country with a variety of circus acts, eventually opening a small animal attraction and dealership in East Camden in the 1920s. By the time of the 1930


I Fear no Competition.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS . . . AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS. SUPPLIED . . . .

WE ALWAYS WANT TO BUY . . . LIVE WILD . . . ANIMALS

J. L. BUCK

Dealer in and Importer of

Wild Animals, DOGS, PETS and REPTILES

Buck's Animal School

Trained Monkeys and Dogs for every up-to-date Act.
Originator of Pony Dogs
And Patentee of Buck's Manakin for Riding Monkeys.

334 South Front St.

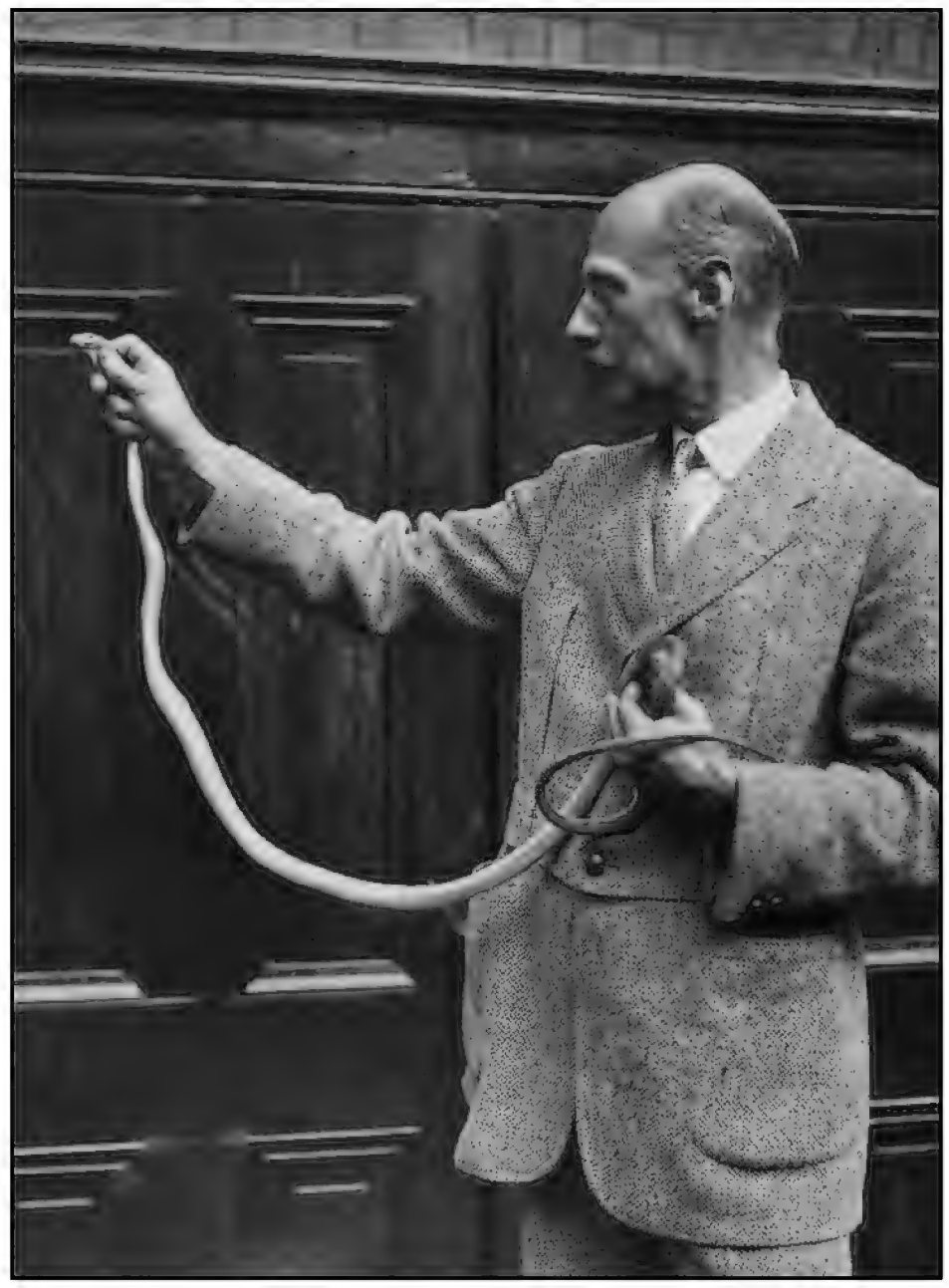
Philadelphia, Pa., 5— 27 1902

A letterhead from Warren Buck's dealer-father Julian Buck (1902).

census, Julius had given his occupation as "animal collector" and Warren's occupation as "helper."

"World's Most Deadly Snakes Captured by Camden Man" read the May 25, 1925, newspaper headline. After returning from a nine-month trip to Sierra Leone, Liberia, and French Guinea (now Guinea), the father and son collecting team of Julius and Warren Buck presented Raymond Ditmars with what was described by the Camden paper as "the most dangerous batch of venomous reptiles ever landed in this country." In the collection of 78 reptiles were 18 mambas, said by Raymond Ditmars to be the first brought back to this country alive. The shipment of snakes also included boomslangs, black spitting cobras, gaboon vipers, a rhino viper, six large pythons, and 12 ball pythons (Anonymous, 1925a).

According to one account, the crates were transferred from



Bronx Zoo curator Raymond Ditmars holding a green mamba. This photograph was widely circulated in newspapers the year following the importation of the first mambas into the U.S. (1926). *Author's collection.*

WARREN E. BUCK

MERCHANTVILLE 10, N. J.
PHONE MERCHANTVILLE 8-4499

IMPORTER AND EXHIBITOR OF
Wild Animals, Birds, Reptiles and African Curios

FARM: ROUTE 40, AT HADDONFIELD R. R. CROSSING, DELAWARE TOWNSHIP

Warren Buck letterhead.

the ship to an awaiting army truck on the docks. A guard was stationed at the rear of the vehicle with what was described as a "heavy club" with the instructions to "strike first" if he saw one of the snake's heads appear (Anonymous, 1925b).

Ditmars (1931) gives a description of the cache of mambas. During uncrating, Ditmars was accompanied by keepers Toomey and Quigly, as well as Emerson Brown, the superintendent of the Philadelphia Zoo. "All were equipped with long rubber coats, gloves and goggles. Their only weapons were brooms and long sticks with wire snares. Opening the first box, they found one unlisted guest, a venomous boomslang, about nine feet long."

"The boomslang sprang from the box and headed for keeper Toomey. He fought it off with a broom and it jumped at Ditmars. In describing his battle with the snake Dr. Ditmars said it was like a terrifically fast game of tennis, played with the knowledge that a missed stroke might mean death."

"The boomslang fought for several minutes from one attendant to the other. All doors, windows and other openings were sealed except the entrance to the snake's cage. Dr. Ditmars caught the snake at last with a snare and hurled it into the cage" (Anonymous, 1925c).

"For five hours the curator and his assistants fought to house the strange snakes. Every mamba fought desperately, but experiences with some of the others were amusing. The ball pythons rolled out on the floor when their cage was opened. When frightened or disturbed they at once curl up and form a perfect sphere. They roll like a billiard ball when touched. After the dangerous work with the boomslang and the mambas the snake reception committee enjoyed the rolling snakes." (Anonymous, 1925c).

Other unexpected snakes encountered while uncrating the shipment included a rhino viper that had given birth to 28 young. The black cobras were apparently new to Ditmars as he had "no data" on them according to another paper. "This is a tame bunch, chief," one of the keepers exclaimed as they unpacked the cobras (Anonymous, 1925b). However, when one of the big snakes "shot its venom fifteen feet down the narrow passage behind the cages, missing Toomey's face by two feet, the curator and his experts were startled," read the paper (Anonymous, 1925a). "Shield your eyes! Get goggles—quick! These are spitting cobras," cried Ditmars. "By time the cobras had gotten into their cages all the goggles had been thickly spattered with their poison and the faces of all of the men were reeking with it" (Anonymous, 1925b). "The black cobra, Dr. Ditmars

Warren Buck with a chimpanzee (1933). *Author's collection*.

Warren Buck with an ostrich (1960). *Unknown newspaper*.

explained, after all the specimens had been caged and he had washed the poison from his face, is one of the most cunning of snakes. It never wastes its poison on mid-air if it can help it. When it elevates its head, points its fangs at an enemy and spurts its venom, it always aims for the eyes. It can hit a target fifteen feet away with deadly accuracy" (Anonymous, 1925b). In a *New York Times* interview, Ditmars later confided the shipment was "the biggest bunch of deviltry that I ever tackled" (Anonymous, 1925c).

In 1930, the father and son collecting team again returned from a trip to Africa with a cargo of animals which included a young gorilla from the French Congo named "Bushman." The young gorilla ended up going to the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago upon return. Not just any gorilla, by 1947 Bushman was deemed "the most outstanding and most valuable single animal of its kind in any zoo in the world" by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA) and was worth an estimated $100,000 (Anonymous, 1947). Covering 5,500 miles by automobile on the seven-month collecting trip, the Bucks were also able to procure specimens of the "deadly horned viper, green mamba, spitting cobra, and rock and royal pythons" (Anonymous, 1930).

In 1932 Buck declared that the danger involved in trapping and handling animals was "the kick" in his profession. Apart from the time a leopard chewed his hand while on a ship coming back from Africa, the most dangerous encounter Buck faced was when he was temporarily blinded when a cobra spit venom in his eyes while "deep in the jungle." He credited a pair of glasses as saving him from total blindness and said his eyes remained sore for a week (Myers, 1932).

In her autobiography *Married to Adventure*, Jule Mannix, wife of adventurer/author Dan Mannix, described Warren Buck's home in Camden as sort of a "commercial Noah's Ark. He had a small flock of ostriches feeding on his lawn, half a dozen lion cubs playing in the sun by the front steps, and several oversized crocodiles in a tank by the barn." Dan Mannix later received notoriety as the photographer who witnessed Grace Wiley's fatal bite from a cobra in Cypress, California (Mannix, 1954).

A newspaper advertisement for Buck's Zoo (ca. 1930s). *Unknown newspaper.*

By 1935, Warren had already made nine collecting trips to Africa. Although he was still operating the animal attraction his father had started in East Camden, Warren eventually opened a 7½-acre menagerie on Marlton Pike. Known as the Warren Buck Zoo and African Curio Display, the facility remained a fixture in Delaware Township into the late 1950s.

Warren E. Buck passed away in November 1985 in Citrus County, Florida.

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What You Missed at the June Meeting: Show and Tell

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I'm always ambivalent about the June meeting. It's our Show and Tell meeting and one of our most popular meetings. Got an animal that you want to show off? Bring it in. You and the animal will be lauded by an audience that is interested, informed, and engaged. You will be asked questions that are deeper than "Does it bite?" and "Is it poisonous?" and are definitely from people who share your interests. It is usually our most well attended meeting and everyone has fun. What's not to like?

This. Trying to find a new way to look at the meeting without continuing to repeat myself. I work at trying to bring to life the meetings and our speakers. I want you to be interested enough to come to a meeting and enjoy the unique environment that one can only get from being there. Inevitably I wind up writing the June meeting up as a list. This person brought this animal. Or this animal brought this person. I might make it seem as if meetings are simply repeats and once you've been to one . . .

Ain't so. Just as each of our speakers for every other meeting is distinct, each of the people willing to introduce us to an animal at the June meeting is exclusive. They come for different reasons and bring different animals. It's just difficult for me to describe without falling back on the formulaic list. So, I'll keep using the list. If you have a better idea, I'll happily consider it.

Nancy Kloskowski brought two adopted *Pituophis*. One was a Kankakee bull snake that wound up with Nancy via a circuitous route. Seems he's a bit aggressive. Nancy has only been bitten twice, and one time he held on for ten minutes. He seemed reasonably relaxed during his time in the spotlight. Her other snake was a Pacific gopher snake, a dark beauty that was small because it's a reluctant eater, but he was healthy and very vocal according to Nancy.

Frank Sladek leans towards the less common animals and he brought two giant or reticulated water skinks. These lizards live around streams and are good swimmers. They are easy to keep but most in the pet trade are imported from Madagascar simply because there is not a lot of people breeding them. Frank hopes that he has a pair and is going to try and breed them. The lizards were calm and easy to handle, but Frank testified that they have a strong bite, since the larger animal bit him at the beginning of the meeting. That's the first time the lizard has bit anyone in spite of being handled by many people. Frank didn't think that he was the target and blamed it on proximity to the female. Those strong jaws will crush crabs and crayfish in the wild, but Frank says his prefer the various invertebrates he feeds them.

Gail Allinson had a nice tale of meeting Bob Krause the first time she attended a meeting two years ago. Bob was breeding her dream snake, the Eastern indigo. About one year later she acquired from Bob a just-hatched indigo she named Shadow. Gail is a self-proclaimed snake mama who really researches the proper care of her animals. She gave us a little background on indigos, including that they are diurnal and mostly visual feeders with gapes not as large as many snakes. Shadow was a pretty example of a well-cared-for animal.

Next we saw a small female ball python that Joella was "95% sure" is a normal. The python was named Nigini and Joella

Frank Sladek gives an excellent talk as usual about his giant water skinks.

Gail Allinson shows off her "dream snake," a beautiful eastern indigo snake.

Joella talks about Nigini, her "lovely lady."

estimated her to be about 15 months old and about two feet, eight inches long. Joella was our youngest presenter but answered several questions about the “lovely lady” snake with aplomb.

Next up was a little Calabar ground python, looking a bit like a sand boa but not closely related. Kayla Cornblath explained that they are fossorial burrowers in leaf litter that will coil much like a ball python when threatened. They are normally docile and shy, though Kayla says hers is not particularly shy. The eight-week-old snake is captive-hatched though most are still wild-caught. They are nest raiders and constrict multiple prey at once, often wiping out entire rodent nests. They can reach one meter in length.

Kayla Cornblath describes the habits of her Calabar ground python.

Elena Moss holds her six-foot-long Bismarck ringed python.

A 6' Bismarck ringed python graced the stage next. Their amber and black rings fade as they age, but they keep their lovely iridescence. According to Elena Moss, hers is an “all-terrain snake” moving around in the cage onto branches and through the water, rarely burrowing despite what Wikipedia says. The snake demonstrated how active it was as Elena tried to keep it from crawling off into the audience. The species is native to the Bismarck Islands, just northeast of New Guinea. Elena said that these snakes haven’t been imported for at least the last 20 years, so any in the States are either “captive-bred or very old.”

Jim Foster brought one of his collection of star tortoises, a little 4- or 5-year-old female. Jim claims that they have good

Jim Foster obviously has a great deal of affection for his star tortoise.

Jonathan Pollack displays Moonlight, a spotted python.

personalities and are hardier than many people claim. Halfway through his presentation the little tortoise decided to empty her bladder. Fortunately Gail Allinson was prepared with towels. She said that an indigo owner has to be ready for these events. Jim's tortoises are always popular at the shows he attends. The tortoises love to eat and Jim feeds a wide variety of greens, though they can be picky about which greens they prefer.

Jonathan and Amelia Pollock stepped up with three snakes. Amelia was into snakes earlier in her life and after indoctrinating Jonathan into the world of snakes, she is happy to be caring for the animals again. Their first snake was an adoption from the CHS, a ball python that was ironically named Sunshine. The second snake they purchased was a six-month-old spotted python, native to Australia. Jonathan suspects that they are cave dwellers because he's read that they eat bats and he confirms that the snake's feeding response is certainly fast enough to snatch bats from midair. They use long tongs to feed it. In all other situations "Moonlight" is an even tempered and compliant snake. The last snake was a corn snake they adopted from Bob Bavirsha. They were good enough to take it in spite of the snake having a cold and an unpleasant disposition because of its illness. Jonathan's education in snakes began with subcutaneous injections every few days. He quickly learned that the snake was calm during the injections. "Miles" is now a healthy happy corn snake living with very caring and competent people.

All animals don't get that quality of care, as Bob Bavirsha

Amelia Pollock holds her adopted ball python, one of three snakes that she and Jonathan showed.

demonstrated once again with his show piece. He had been asking everyone to guess the age of the Burmese python that he had picked up just that day from people who claimed that the snake had excellent care. The python was thin, dehydrated, and less than six feet long. It was 11 years old. Bob will try and get the snake on a proper diet and good care in hopes that the snake will appear at next year's ReptileFest. He has hopes for this guy. Always an advocate for these animals, Bob asked us to get involved with friends and neighbors who have herps and inform people of the proper care. Perhaps a bit of a depressing end to Show and Tell, but a lesson that we can all appreciate.

Show and Tell. Neat animals, great people, good deeds. What's not to like? Come next year.

Bob Bavirsha is holding an 11-year-old Burmese python that he brought to emphasize why proper care is important.

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Tiger by the Tail and the "First Ouch"

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It started as a pleasant family gathering around the supper table at the Repp household. At the time, these family prandial aggregates were a recent development in our family history. Heretofore, we had watched TV from various locations in the living room, shoveling down various food stuffs while ignoring each other. Both my 19-year-old son Tim and I thought this to be a good arrangement. But "you know who" thought otherwise. Even though it was a two-to-one decision, the strong vote of one made it unanimous—we *would* be eating supper at the table henceforth and forever. Or else we would *not* be eating at all. Despite knowing well the three fastest means of communication (telephone; telegraph; tell a Tim), in a moment of extreme foolishness, I took my son to one side and urged him "Just go along with it. She'll get tired of it soon enough." It was agreed that this would be our little secret, which lasted long enough for Tim to immediately take my wife Dianna into "our" confidence, and tell her exactly what I had told him. If the "we eat at the table" mandate had any weaknesses in the mind of Dianna, they were eliminated by the WikiLeaks enormity of Tim's revelation.

On this fateful day around the table, a letter had just arrived, stamped and postmarked from Switzerland. It was from my Swiss friend Urs Brünner, who had just returned home after two months in the Tucson area. (Europeans *know* how to take a vacation!). The envelope was stuffed with photos. It was Dianna's notion that we would read the letter at the table, and look at the photos that Urs had sent. What better way to stir up some pleasant dinner conversation could there be? Letters from across the big pond don't happen every day, and this letter was big JuJu. And so, Dianna opens the letter, and begins to shuffle through the pictures. Indeed, plenty of conversation did follow this simple act—none of it pleasant. A sequence of five photos was found to be objectionable by Dianna. The first was a crappy, dark photo of a Tiger Rattlesnake coiled in the back of a mini-cave. The second was of my Swiss friend and coworker Rene (who was a male Rene, thank goodness—I was already in *enough* trouble) shining a mirror over top of a pair of bare legs that were sticking out of a cavernous opening in the ground. Those legs belonged to me. The next photo caught a *filthy* Roger Repp in the act of inching backwards on his belly out of the mini-cave. The tail of a Tiger Rattlesnake was clenched in his left hand, and he was dragging it backwards in front of him. The next was Roger Repp standing, covered head to toe with dusty cave filth, his belt buckle undone by the backwards crawl. The top of his shorts are now roughly at level with his crotch. He looks *ridiculous*. Held in his left hand is the tail of a 30-inch-long Tiger Rattlesnake. Frozen in time with one snap of Urs's shutter, the Tiger is coming up at Repp's left hand, mouth agape, ready to deliver a bit of fire and ice—and perhaps a coffin—to the hand that held the tail. The fifth and final picture was of that same tiger rattlesnake coiled nicely in front of a prickly pear cactus.

Needless to say, the one-sided discussion directed at the person commanding center stage in the photo was impressive—in both content and duration. There were many reminders of how costly hospital bills can be, and how irresponsible the act was on the part of the sole breadwinner of the family. As momentum finally began to peter out, it was suggested how *stupid* the guy in the picture looked. I believe the *exact* words were: "Like a really stupid caveman."

Had I simply shut up at that point, things would have settled down. But the "really stupid cave man" part of the diatribe could not go unchallenged. There was a reason that this big sin on the part of the breadwinner had transpired, and said breadwinner felt that he needed to justify the act. Hence, the voice of reason became the symbolic shovel necessary to deepen the hole that he was already in. I explained that Urs, a visiting dignitary, did not have a flash unit for his camera. This was his first tiger ever, and he was unable to photograph it properly. As none of us had collecting gear, it only made good sense that the most experienced herper deal with getting the snake out into daylight in order to get a photo. I was not a stupid caveman. I was a hero!

This reasoning became, in essence, the wind-up key to the whine mode in Dianna's vocal chords. It certainly got things cranked up! Man, was there *ever* a torrential tirade to follow. On and on it went until such point as Tim was inspired to intercede on my behalf by interjecting: "Jeez, Ma. Leave the poor guy alone." As he articulated these thoughts, a burrito weighing perhaps a half pound was hovering before his pie hole. Following these words, the entire thing was stuffed into his gullet.

"Wow!" I mused to myself, "did that just happen? Did the fruit of my loins actually just stick up for me?" Why, yes indeed he had! There *is* a first time for everything—and this was it. As is often the case with the man of any given household, it was normally my job to be picked on like a festering scab by the remaining members of the family. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of fatherly pride as I gazed lovingly upon my son. True, the inner feeling diminished ever-so-slightly with the visual of Tim suddenly realizing that the burrito he had stuffed in its entirety into his gullet was piping hot. His visage grew red, steam began to egress from both ears, and an entire glass of water was hurled down his cavernous throat in an attempt to put out the fire. But nevertheless, through all of the gurgling and choking noises that followed, my elated feeling of fatherly pride endured. Said pride ended as soon as that burrito was choked down, and he could finish his thought.

"Jeez, Ma. Leave the poor guy alone…" snort, guttural noises, both hands waving over his mouth, glug-glug, grimace and a vigorous head shake. "Once the idiot gets bit enough, he'll learn . . . "

The words above were all written on Father's Day of 2018. Happy Father's Day to all the dads of the world! Mothers are

justifiably revered and venerated for all they endure. How about a round of applause for those poor slobs who bring home the paycheck for their entire lives, only to receive a collect phone call on the one day that is designated for them? Hear, hear!

But my son was right. "The idiot" *did* finally get bit enough to learn . . .

There is a club out there on the hazy perimeter of organizations that is devoted to people like me. Any new members of this club are welcome to join, but the initiation fee to join is rather hefty. In order to become a member of this club, one must be on the receiving end of a venomous snake bite. We speak of course of the ***White Fang Club***. While the club exists for all people without regard to color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, geek status or IQ level, one must bear in mind that most members are of a herpetological bent. Or is it, "herpetologically bent"? I mean, yeah, if you're just the average schmuck who gets nailed doing yard work, you're still in. But *those* people get sympathy. Those of us who join as a result of working with venomous snakes, well . . . let's be kind and say that we face ridicule. Said ridicule is so harsh that the herpers who *are* members of the White Fang Club often bury their stories out of embarrassment and never reveal the entangling idiosyncrasies of their experience. There *is* no red badge of courage for the likes of us. Professional herpetologists can lose their jobs as a result. This is tragic, because there is much to be learned from each incident. The stuff that you learn can't be found in books—because every idiot who *has* been bitten clams up. Sure, hospital records exist, but those who maintain them keep it to a minimum. "He came in at such and such a time, he was all messed up, we did this and this and this, and he lived anyhow, just to spite us. He was discharged at such and such a time, and thank god, Greyhound and the health insurance companies that he is gone. It'll cost him a million bucks. What an idiot!"

Speaking of idiots, this author is a four-time loser. While that makes me somewhat of an expert, there are those who would scoff at this and wonder why I stopped at four. In my defense, I will say that I have been bitten *four* times because I do *not* wish to be bitten *five* times. I'm already picking my nose with lefty, and I don't care to try performing that favored hobby of mine with one of my elbows. But there are people who are so predisposed for snakebite that they barely make it out of their mother's womb before they get nailed. With many folks it is almost an annual event. They are the magnets, and venomous snakes are the steel. Or vice versa. With some of them, if one waxes bold enough to ask how many times they have been bit, they respond with questions like "Does twice from the same snake count as two? Are we talking about double-fang penetration, or do one fangers count? What about rear-fanged snakes?" Or, "I'm not sure I can remember them all," or even, "I'm not sure that I can count that high." As it appears that none of these experts will ever put any of their experiences in print, my four-time-loser status will have to do for this article. Whenever I feel I don't have anything interesting to share with my Chicago brothers and sisters (like this month, for example), I will share my experiences. One at a time, that is. All four at once would take a book length column, and there have been too many of *those* already.

Leaving behind Urs, the tiger and happy family repasts for this month, we speak now of the "First Ouch." Bite number one was from a meter plus long pet Copperhead named "Pug," which was short for "Pugnacious." She was wild-caught by yours truly in 1973, and the mishap occurred in 1976. Pug was not popular with my landlord. As soon as he found out I was keeping her, the abrupt message from the landlord was "either she goes, or you go." A solution to the edict of his royal landlordliness was found when my older brother Bob reluctantly agreed to keep Pug at his place. This arrangement worked out well until Pug took it upon herself to puke into her water bowl. Bob was unaccustomed to the aroma of puked mousey soup, and immediately went on the hunt for me. He found me lounging at my parents' house, became a raging bull, and forcibly (in front of many reliable witnesses) shanghaied me from there to go to his house and clean that cage. I had none of my snake handling gear with me at the time. Hence, it became an afternoon of improvisation—never a good thing where successful venomous snake handling is concerned. We somehow got Pug into a paper grocery sack, the top of which was rolled downward and sealed with two clothespins. This did not exactly scream "Pro Handling Gear," but it did the job. Next came the gut-wrenching task of cleaning the 20-gallon aquarium that she resided in. Once everything was sanitized and clean, it was time to put her back in her cage. The top of the bag was unrolled, and without an ounce of thought, I placed my right hand under the bag to support the snake as I dumped her back in. As soon as my palm went flat against the bottom of the bag, Pug punched through it, scoring a one-fang hit that went deep into the fleshy middle of my life line. (Which in turn shortened it considerably).

What followed next has been universal with all four personal experiences. There was the soon-to-be customary utterance from my gullet "Sunova-*bitch*! She bit me!" Following that came the rapid flow of blood from the wound. This died down quickly, and within ten seconds, one would have had to dig deep to even find blood. I don't remember exactly how Pug got back in her cage, but I would imagine that it happened quickly. And then came the big panic.

The big panic did *not* come from me. I sat down in an easy chair, while putting lesson number one from everything that I had read about snakebites into practice. Said lesson is: "The victim *must* remain calm." While I was reclining and trying to reach the Zen state of utter calm, my older brother was completely freaking out. "*How can you just sit there? What do we do now? I'm saying I don't know what to do. Get off your ass and do something . . . "*

"I ***am*** doing something," came my measured response. "I'm ***trying*** to be calm. You flitting about like a fart on a hot griddle isn't helping me any."

"Okay! Okay! Okay! You're right! What should I do? I'm saying I don't know what to do! What should I do?"

"Call an ambulance . . . "

"I don't know the number!"

(Now he was pissing me off).

"Call 9-1-1, ***stupid***! This is all *your* fault. You couldn't stand a little stink for long enough for me to do things right, and then

you dragged me off to get bit. Wait'll I tell Ma!"

Evoking the name of Ma had more effect than a good face slap, and Bob was on that phone like stink on a monkey. The Crystal Lake, Illinois, police department was equal to the task. In my home town, there were at least five cops for every taxpayer, which allowed for maximum efficacy on their part. As soon as Bob hung up, there was a sharp rap on the door. Four cops entered shortly after. One of the cops took one look at Pug staring smugly back out of the aquarium at him, and went for his radio. Sayeth the cop into said radio: "This is *not* a false alarm. Send an ambulance *immediately*." Less than five minutes later, the ambulance arrived, and scores of curious onlookers began to gather around Bob's house.

The chief paramedic was a young, square-jawed, blue-eyed, red-haired person of a moderate, healthy build and pleasant demeanor. He was also about to become a hero to me. (He *did* save a life this day—but it wasn't mine). By this point in time, all bleeding had stopped from my hand, and some swelling around the bite area was evident. There was not much pain to speak of, just a little bit of throbbing, but the swelling did indicate that the bite wasn't dry. The paramedic put a loose tourniquet on my right wrist, as per the accepted treatment of its time. We shall henceforth respectfully call the paramedic "John," which is short for "John Wayne." For following the application of the tourniquet, "The John Wayne Snakebite Treatment" was to follow next. In other words, "cut 'n suck" was about to be employed—and I love this man too much to call him "Cut 'n Suck." John was thwarted ever so slightly when he could not find a scalpel in his first aid kit. My helpful older brother offered up a switchblade, but John feared whatever infectious disease might still be clinging to that. (Heaven knows where *that* knife had been). John instead selected a needle that was roughly 4 mm in diameter, the hollow point of which was flared inward to form a sharp edge and point around the perimeter of the inner diameter. It looked exactly like a microchip injector to me, but it is unlikely that's what this needle was. So really, instead of cut 'n suck, it became more of a matter of stab/slash and suck.

Even before it began, I remained passively against the entire notion of the John Wayne treatment. In measured tones, I informed John that he didn't *need* to do this sort of thing. But there was to be no talking him out of it, even when I suggested that if he had any sores in his mouth or bleeding gums they would be checking us *both* into the hospital. But no, he "vanted to suck my blood." And so, off he went in a frenzy of jabbing, slashing, sucking and spitting. It was quite the experience to watch him put his mouth against my hand whilst doing his utmost to lay a hickey there. The wound was not cooperating, and from what I could see of it all, his spit was clear. But that was not really his fault, and I give him an A+ for the effort. He did this for about five minutes, while yet another paramedic inserted an IV into my right arm.

A stretcher on wheels was produced, and I was made to lie flat upon it, right hand above my heart, while four stout medical yeomen hefted me up and carried me out Bob's front door. (I could have easily walked out, held the door open for everybody, and locked up afterwards. But where's the drama in that?). As soon as the front door was open, I heard somebody say "Here he comes." This voice came from out of a crowd of about 200 curious onlookers who had gathered to hopefully witness somebody oozing pus from every orifice. Glad to disappoint them! The street that my brother lived on was normally a quiet residential area, but it was now a scene not unlike a SWAT team standoff. Cop cars with lights ablaze lined both sides of the street, there were multiple fire trucks equally ablaze, and think I caught a glimpse of the local dogcatcher as well. The cops cleared a swath wide enough for me to be carried through the crowd. Total strangers were clapping me on the shoulder and wishing me luck as we passed through the corridors of people who were in turn pressing in to get a closer look. The stretcher was thrust into the back of my chariot, and John stepped inside with me. He was going to ride with me to the hospital in McHenry, Illinois—roughly 15 minutes away. Just before the doors were closed in the ambulance, I alertly noticed two cops carrying Pug's aquarium out Bob's front door. At this, I started to rise to protest, but John pinned me back down, and threatened to strap me in. The last thing that the crowd heard before the ambulance doors slammed shut was me loudly exhorting those cops to leave Pug alone. This wasn't her fault! John got me calmed me down by issuing a promise that he would see to it that nothing would happen to Pug. I remained dubious, but John was strong enough that I knew further resistance was futile. And as it turned out, John was as good as his word.

The ambulance arrived at the hospital, and I was wheeled into my temporary room. I was surrounded by all manner of fully garbed medical staff, a few malingering cops, and my new friend and suck buddy John. My doctor came in, medical book in hand, and while he read this he issued various edicts to the staff. Whatever was in this massive book was, in my opinion, spot-on-accurate with how to treat a snakebite. Almost everything went swimmingly well after that. I say "almost" because initially, a rubber contraption of the same size and shape as a light bulb was produced. It was flimsily thin, and woefully inadequate for the task at hand. The doctor handed an orderly the suck-less wonder, and instructed him to employ it on the bite zone. This thing could not have sucked the shit out of a fly's ass—John Wayne it was *not*! So the poor guy stood over me, squeezing in and out and accomplishing *nothing* for the next half-hour. At one point, I suggested to the orderly that he wasn't accomplishing SQUAT with all of his efforts. He just shrugged and said it was his job to do what the doctor said. Right on! He certainly wasn't making anything worse, and was gaining knowledge of the number one rule of first aid: "Do no harm."

By this point, the swelling in my palm was such that it had reached the digits. But there was no necrotic tissue around the bite zone, and at no point did the swelling worsen. The pain was a mild throb. It was all just a love tap from Pug in the end. Meanwhile, Dr. DoRight and his medical volume had arranged various doses of the good old Wyeth antivenom (horse serum for a horse's ass) to test on me. I was injected with a thousand-to-one ratio first. They waited for any reaction. Then it was hundred to one (no reaction), ten to one (no reaction) and the full monty (no reaction). Five vials then went into my IV bag, and I was wheeled into my five star (cost-wise) room for the night. Most of the people had cleared out by this point. My wife Dianna, with baby Tim in her arms, was the first to arrive. She

was harangued for a while by those who monitor the till of the hospital until such point as they were satisfied that we had insurance. She was then a bastion of wifely concern for her man, but expressed the thought that she overheard some cops saying that they were going to euthanize Pug. There was no surge of joy running up and down my spine at this announcement. But John Wayne eventually popped back into my room, gave me a wink and said "I got your snake, pal." I could have kissed him! He slipped Dianna a business card with his home address and phone number scrawled on it. How he got hold of Pug I will never know, as I never saw him again. The following morning was a vast disappointment to Dr. DoRight. The swelling was gone, there was zero pain, and his one and only ever snakebite victim was discharged without further incident. Two days later, I called John's house. His wife, "Ms. Wayne" (?), answered, and strongly encouraged me to stop by the house for Pug. She was soon safe and sound back at the house of a friend. Brother Bob no longer wished to have her at his residence. He already knew every cop in town, and felt no need to associate any further than that with them. And as big and bad as he was, he never got over the stench of puked mousey soup. Dianna, Tim and I moved to a new place shortly after, and Pug once again commanded center stage of our bedroom.

Earlier on, mention was made of the tragedy of the lack of learning on the part of others due to the sounds of silence from White Fang Club members. While the main purpose of *any* Roger Repp article is to entertain, there is always an attempt to enlighten. For example, ***I did not know*** that a venomous snake would bite through a bag of any type. I do now—and so do you! Here's another one for you: An unnamed professional herpetologist puts a rattlesnake in an aquarium with a screen top. While making sure the screen top is properly affixed, he gets his face too close to it. The snake strikes upward, hits the screen, and a fine mist of venom goes into both eyes, which in turn become, in his words, "hamburger" for the next week. Have I got your attention? Good! Because there are bite events that are even more incredible than this!

"How did it happen?" is *always* the number one thing asked of us White Fangers, and oftentimes knowledge of this can save somebody else from going through the same ordeal. There are lessons both good and bad to come from a snakebite. *Never* attempt to handle a venomous snake (I should stop there) without the proper equipment. The immediate flow of blood following this and each of my other three bites is noteworthy. There is something in that—maybe an argument for immediate suction at that point? In spite of the hindsight that an ambulance was not necessary, it was the right thing to do. But of course, the cutting and sucking at that point was not. And along those lines, the person bitten often knows more about proper first aid techniques than the professionals. In other words *speak up*! The life you save may be your own. It is my opinion that the injection of varied and increased test dosages of antivenom was *brilliant*. I leave whether or not the antivenom is necessary to those involved in the situation. In this case, it probably was not.

There is one more thing to come of this that I am hesitant to mention, but I'm certain enough of it to think it is important. From that day forward, whenever I approached Pug's cage closely, my hand would start to throb. Psychosomatic? Perhaps. But when I cleaned her cage, the hand would swell and hurt all the more. And as my other bites mounted up, more of these unusual symptoms appeared. I now hear of people so sensitive to venom that they can't enter a room with venomous snakes in it without fainting! As sharp as most toxicologists are, we still are in our infancy when it comes to understanding the finer nuances of envenomation. The more that people like us talk, the better it may be in the long run for other folks.

This here is Roger Repp, signing off from Southern Arizona, where the turtles are strong, the snakes are handsome, and the lizards are *all* above average.

Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, June 15, 2018

Rich Crowley called the meeting to order at 7:48 P.M. Board members Dan Bavirsha, Lawrence Huddleston, Tom Mikosz and Jessica Wadleigh were absent. Minutes of the May 18 board meeting were read and accepted with changes.

Officers' Reports

Treasurer: John Archer presented the financial reports for May. There was discussion of whether the CHS should continue paying to be listed on Meetup.com.

Media secretary: Kim Klisiak (via email) reported that she has made the arrangements for a new host for the CHS websites. While the new sites are under development, Kim will set up access for some of the board members so they can provide feedback.

Membership secretary: Mike Dloogatch read the list of expiring memberships.

Sergeant-at-arms: Mike Scott reported 30 people in attendance at the May 30 general meeting.

Committee Reports

Shows: Gail Oomens reported that CHS live animal shows are in abeyance until we have obtained new liability insurance.

Adoptions: Linda Malawy has stepped down as adoptions chair. Zorina Banas has taken over the position.

Grants: One grant recipient's project has been canceled due to factors beyond his control.

New Business

Newly designed business-card-size invitations to attend CHS meetings are being printed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Gail Oomens

Herpetology 2018

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

FOUNTAIN BLUFF SLIMY SALAMANDERS

D. B. Shepard and A. R. Kuhns [2017, Journal of Zoology 304(4):235-242] note that geographic barriers are integral to the processes of dispersal and vicariance, but some barriers, such as rivers, may vary spatiotemporally, potentially affecting biodiversity patterns in significant ways. Fountain Bluff is an isolated upland in the Mississippi River floodplain along the Illinois-Missouri border. The Mississippi River presently runs on the west side of Fountain Bluff, but the course ran on the east side prior to the Illinois glacial stage (~150,000 years ago). The northern slimy salamander (*Plethodon glutinosus*) occurs to the east in Illinois, whereas the morphologically similar western slimy salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) occurs to the west in Missouri. The authors used mitochondrial and nuclear DNA sequences to determine the species identity of slimy salamanders on Fountain Bluff and test whether they originated via vicariance (*P. albagula*) or dispersal (*P. glutinosus*). They found that slimy salamanders on Fountain Bluff are *P. glutinosus*, which supports the hypothesis that they originated via dispersal from the river bluffs ~6 km to the east. Divergence time estimates corroborated that dispersal likely occurred after the westward diversion of the Mississippi River. The shifting courses of large rivers have had important impacts on biodiversity through the creation and removal of geographic barriers as well as by facilitating passive dispersal across riverine barriers.

SPOTTED SALAMANDER DEMOGRAPHICS

R. N. Homan et al. [2018, Herpetologica 74(2):109-116] report that the need for long-term demographic studies on apparently healthy amphibian populations led them to undertake an intensive examination of a population of spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) at a small, temporary pond in Ohio. From 2005 to 2014, they captured adults and juveniles at the pond edge, individually marked a subset of adults, and examined patterns in breeding population size, sex ratios, recruitment, differences in body size over time, and survival and recapture rates. Size of this breeding population varied 2.65-fold across 10 yr, with an overall negative trend driven by a decline in adult males, despite the fact that adult annual survival was not dependent on sex, and that males were more likely to be recaptured annually than were females. Recruitment rates were low and never reached replacement values. Body sizes varied across years for adults as well as for emerging juveniles, and females lost a larger fraction of their mass in the pond than males, especially as time in the pond increased. Some demographic variables were consistent with previous shorter term studies. The study showed unusually low recruitment and annual recapture rates, however, in addition to a decline in males over time, which might reflect an expanded understanding of what is typical for this species. It might also indicate that the population was in the early stages of decline, potentially affected by changes in hydroperiod and increases in infectious disease mortality.

OVERWINTERING IN THE NEST BY HATCHLING GILA MONSTERS

D. F. DeNardo et al. [2018, Proceedings of the Royal Society B 285:20180632] note that the timing of reproductive events (e.g., oviposition and hatching) to coincide with favorable seasonal conditions is critical for successful reproduction. However, developmental time may not match the duration between the optimal time for oviposition and the optimal time for hatchling survival. Thus, strategies that alter the time between oviposition and hatchling emergence can be highly advantageous. Arrested development and the resulting extension of the duration between oviposition and hatching has been widely documented across oviparous amniotes, but nest overwintering by hatchlings has only been documented in aquatic chelonians that live where winters are quite cold. The authors present a compilation of evidence regarding reproductive phenology by hatchlings of the Gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*), a lizard inhabiting the Sonoran Desert of North America. Their data demonstrate that (i) Gila monster hatchlings from eggs oviposited in July do not emerge from their nests until late spring or summer of the following year, yet (ii) Gila monster eggs artificially incubated at field-relevant temperatures hatch in 4–5 months. Furthermore, they describe a fortuitous excavation of a hatching Gila monster nest in late October, which coincides with the artificial incubation results. Together, these results provide strong support for the existence of overwintering in the nest by a lizard, and suggest that this reproductive strategy should be explored in a broader array of taxa.

EVALUATING TRANSLOCATED HELLBENDERS

B. T. Kraus et al. [2017, Herpetologica 73(4):271-276] note that recent amphibian declines have been addressed with a variety of conservation tools, including translocations. It is important to evaluate the success of ongoing amphibian conservation programs. In Indiana, because of the documented decline of the eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus a. alleganiensis*) population, translocations of wild-captured and captive-reared individuals have been implemented as a management strategy. This study was developed to estimate the annual survivorship of translocated versus resident eastern hellbenders and to compare the efficacy of translocating wild adults and captive-reared juveniles. Adult residents, and translocated adult and juvenile subjects, were implanted with radio transmitters in a staggered entry design and tracked for up to 2 years. A Cox proportional hazards model indicated that captive-reared, juvenile hellbenders had lower annual survival rates than did either resident or translocated adults. The relatively high survival rates of all groups indicated the potential utility of both types of translocations as a tool to increase local densities, although there might be room for improvement of the survival rates for captive-reared juveniles through either increased rearing periods or environmental conditioning prior to release.

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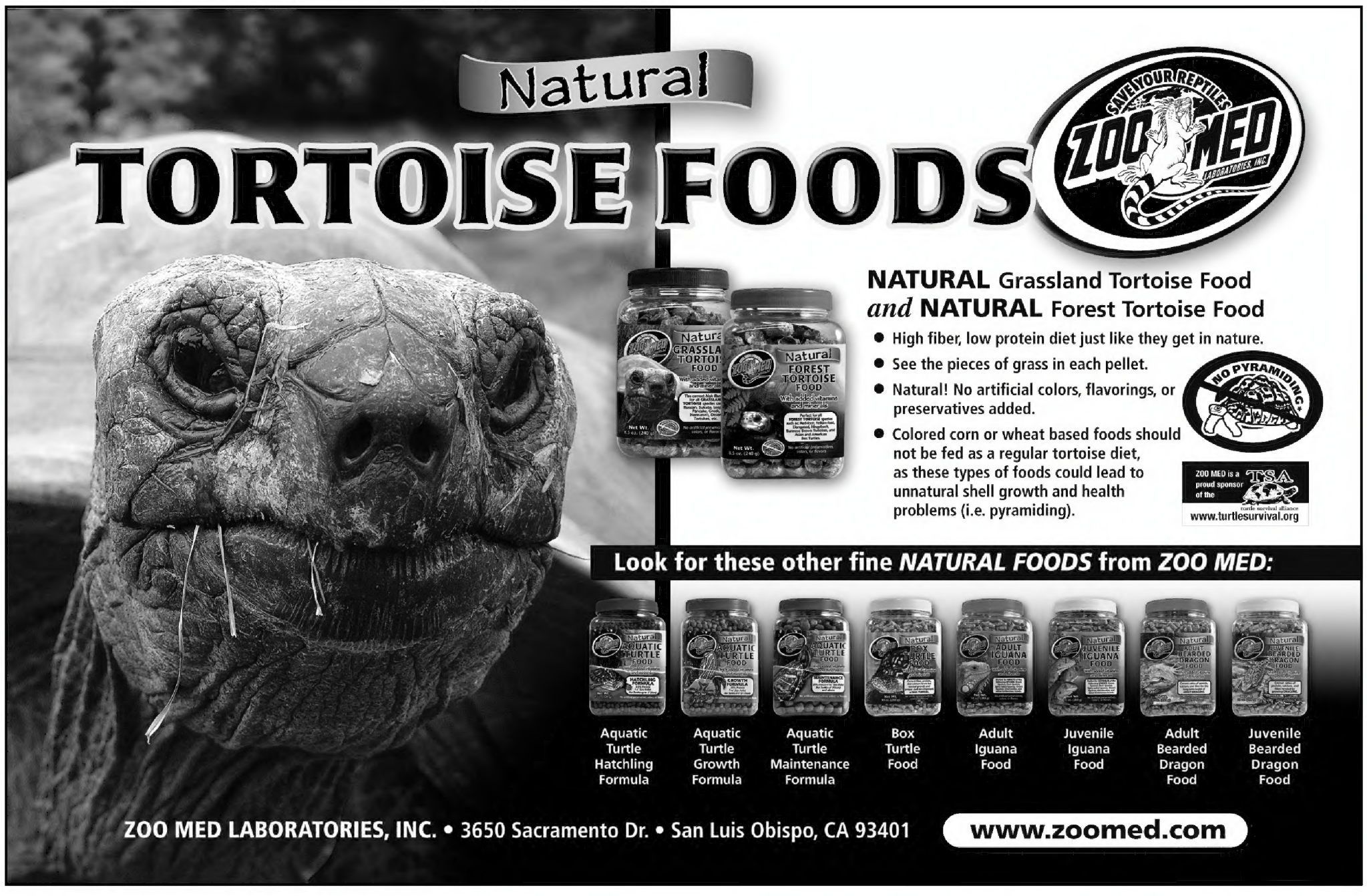
Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members—$2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org.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UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, July 25, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. **Daniel Parker**, a biologist from central Florida and the owner of Sunshine Serpents (www.sunshineserpents.com). Daniel will speak on "The Road and the Forest—The Wildlife of a Historic Natural Area in Central Florida and the Road That Divides It." This program will cover an extensive University of Central Florida study on the impacts of State Road 40 on wildlife in Ocala National Forest, Marjorie Harris-Carr Greenway, and Silver River State Park in Marion County, Florida. The presentation will include tidbits on the colorful history of the area, the results of a radio telemetry study on box turtles and gopher tortoises, and notes on other herpetological projects.

At the August 29 meeting **Frank Ziegler** will speak about the amphibians and reptiles of Romania.

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society take place at Chicago's newest museum—the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. A plethora of CTA buses stop nearby.

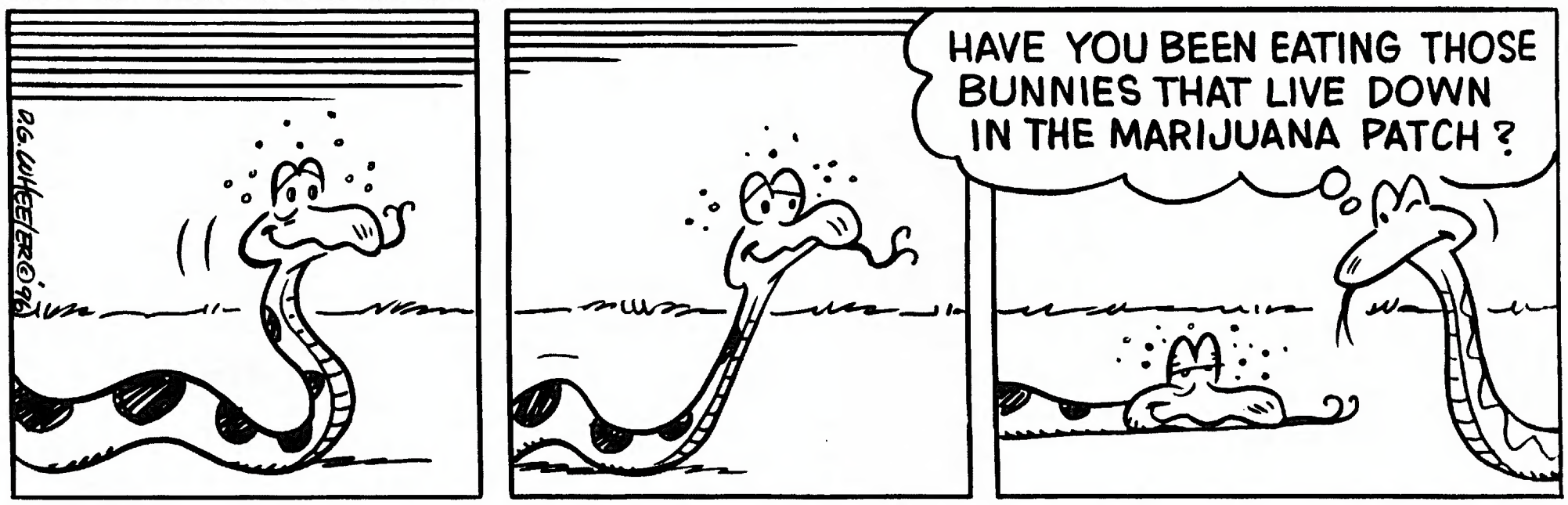
Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the next board meeting, to take place on August 17, 2018. The venue is as yet uncertain, so if you wish to attend please email mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org.

The Chicago Turtle Club

The monthly meetings of the Chicago Turtle Club are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome. Meetings normally take place at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. Parking is free. For more info visit the group's Facebook page.

THE ADVENTURES OF SPOT



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